



Artist Workshop:

Mono Printing with a Silkscreen

Step-by-step guide to a simple but effective artist's technique that captures the beauty of watercolour in a print.

A fun and engaging art workshop for pupils at Secondary School.

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While many screen-printing techniques use photographic or paper stencils to recreate images one colour at a time, mono printing with a silkscreen enables the artist to reproduce a full-colour painting in a single print.

Capturing the same painterly and textural effects produced by painting with watercolours or inks, this easy silkscreen method requires only basic screen printing equipment and a few simple supplies. Ideal for secondary school pupils exploring a range of media, this fun and engaging workshop will inspire them to experiment with both watercolour and printmaking techniques to produce beautiful, professional results.

What you'll need:

- Silkscreens
- Squeegees
- Concentrated cold-water dyes
- Wallpaper or cellulose paste
- Palettes
- Paintrushes
- Salt crystals
- Hair dryer
- Quality cartridge or watercolor paper
- Masking tape

Step 1: Painting on the Silkscreen

Supply each student with a blank silkscreen, instructing them to place it face-upwards on their work surface. Adding a little water to each of the concentrated dyes in the individual wells of a palette, they are ready to start painting on the surface of the screen. Instruct students to use the dyes like inks or watercolours. They can mix a range of colours and apply with a brush, or experiment with other mark-making tools such as sponges and cotton buds.. Allow screens to dry before printing.

TIPS:

- For soft, painterly effects, encourage students to layer colours on top of each other, or allow dyes to bleed into one another.
- For a sharper effect, students should leave dyes to dry before applying the next colour. (Drying with a hair-dryer helps to speed things along.)
- Sprinkling salt crystals over the dye while it is still wet will produce textural, marbled effects. Rub off any salt crystals before printing.
- Remind students that the images they are painting will print in reverse. This is particularly important if their design incorporates text as they will need to paint any words back to front.

Step 2: Preparing to Print

Ask students to assist each other by working in pairs. Taking it in turns to print, they each select a sheet of good quality white cartridge, or smooth watercolour paper and place it on a clean, flat surface. Instruct them to tape the corners with masking tape to secure it in place, then position the screen face-down on the paper, ensuring that the image is centred on the surface.

Step 3: Mono Printing the Image

Students add wallpaper (cellulose) paste to water and mix to a jelly-like consistency. (If you prefer, you can prepare this beforehand, ready for use.) Using the squeegee as a barrier, the student rests it at the **top** of the screen, pouring the clear paste along the taped area above it. Working with their partner (who is holding the screen firmly in place), they then place both hands on top of the squeegee and pull the paste across the mesh, applying pressure to transfer the painted image to the paper.

Using a paintbrush to remove the excess paste from the rubber blade of the squeegee, the student distributes it evenly along the taped area at the **bottom** of the screen. This time, gripping the sides of the squeegee, they push the paste back across the silkscreen. Two pulls are normally enough to transfer the dyes to the paper.

And now for the moment everyone has been waiting for, the student lifts the screen, revealing their finished print!

Step 4: Cleaning the Silkscreen

Having left their work in a safe place to dry, students can begin to clean up. In art rooms and studios that are not equipped with a pressure hose and wash-off unit, silkscreens can be washed under the tap in a large sink, or using a hand-held shower attachment if available,. Care should be taken to thoroughly remove the dyes and cellulose paste to prevent the mesh from blocking. Mopping up excess surface water with paper towels, students can check for any blockages by holding the screen up to the light. Silkscreens can then be left upright to dry in a well-ventilated area.

The Finished Print:



Mono printing with a silkscreen enables students to create professional results in vibrant colours and interesting textures. Learning about the technique in this fun workshop, they will discover the thrill of lifting the screen to reveal their finished print!